

**Merrimack School Board Budget Hearing
Merrimack School District
School Administrative District Unit #26
January 8, 2019 (Tuesday)
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room**

Present: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Schneider and Board Member Guagliumi and Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

Board Members Schoenfeld and Nunez were excused from the meeting.

1. Call to Order

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Participation

Richard Foote, 129 Indian Rock Road asked how to get copies of the budget presentations.

Chair Barnes responded that everything is available on the school district website.

4. Budget Presentations

- **James Mastricola Elementary School, Reeds Ferry Elementary School, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School**

Chair Barnes invited elementary school administrators Michelle Romein, Alisha Hansen-Proulx, Kimberly Yarlott, Rachel Schneider, Bridey Bellemare, and Julie DeLuca to the table.

Principal Bellemare provided an overview of the budget presentation and then provided responses to board members previously submitted questions.

In regard to her questions Chair Barnes noted that these questions apply to all schools. Many of these answers will be the same and if you choose to have one answer for all that would be satisfactory to me. I used ** for the school account number.”

In reference to budget line item 100.2122.29.8641.**; “Will this account be recurring at this rate or will there be lesser expenses in subsequent years knowing we are establishing the program contents in 2019-2020?”

Principal Bellemare responded that the majority of the expenses are start-up costs for the materials for the social-emotional learning program. Going forward there should only be minimal expenses.

Chair Barnes had submitted the question “(ALL) Field Trips: What out of pocket costs do students have for these outings? Are these funds available for those receiving free/reduced lunch? Are those on free/reduced lunch expected to bring lunch from home?”

Principal Bellemare responded that the entrance fee ranges from \$0 to \$14 per field trip. Students on free/reduced lunch is a confidential matter, but all are afforded lunch. All students attend field trips.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in reference to budget line items 100.1111.11.8641.** and 100.1111.11.8610.**; “Math Texts versus Math Materials: Knowing we just rolled out a new math curriculum, are the expenses in 100.1111.11.8641.** truly for textbooks (such as unreturned or damaged) or are they for disposable materials that could also be accounted for in 100.1111.11.8610.**? MES shows a refresh rate of 50% of last year’s rate on Math texts where RFS was 18% and TFS was 35% based on prior years’ budget expenditures.”

Principal Bellemare responded that a part of the new Envisions Math program implementation consists of intervention and extension resources which consist of two separate components and are purchased separately and have varying costs. In the 2019-2020 proposed budget the final components will be purchased.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100.1118.18.8737.**; “Please provide an update on where you are with your current defined furniture replacement plan. It is understood that as one plan expires another will be developed based on the deterioration of furniture based on heavy usage.”

Principal Bellemare responded to date all schools have replaced all student desks and chairs with the exception of two or three classrooms.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted the question “MES, RFS, TFS: Additional materials for ‘social-emotional learning skills’. Across all elementary grades this new category exists, totaling over \$30K across all 4 buildings. Can administration (or the principals) provide details on what these items include, and how it will be integrated into the curriculum?”

Principle Bellemare responded that the social-emotional learning materials are curriculum-based and will be purchased for each K-5 classroom. Funds will also be used for professional development on-line parental access, training and additional materials.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted the question “All schools-Furniture Upgrades-I realize that each school has an ongoing furniture upgrade set of line items. Can the schools help to let us understand how the listed items were chosen, and whether there are “must replace” items in that list vs things that could be expended?”

Principal Bellemare responded that the priority has been the replacement of classroom tables and chairs.

Board Member Schoenfeld had submitted a question in reference to budget line items 100-1111-11-8641-11, 100-1111-11-8641-12 and 100-1111-11-8641-13; “Math/Text: The total for this line for teacher materials in mathematics has been substantially reduced from previous years. How has this savings been accomplished? Are there resources that will no longer be available/are no longer needed? (This question was mirrored in those to JMUES)”

Principal Bellemare responded after this budget cycle, all teacher materials will have been purchased.

Board Member Schoenfeld had submitted a question in reference to budget line items 100-2122-29-8641-11, 100-2122-29-8641-12 and 100-2122-29-8641-13; “Guidance/Text: To help contextualize this expense for those who may not have seen/heard presentations to the Board on this topic in the past-please describe these materials and the ways they contribute to providing a safe and supportive learning environment. (This request was mirrored in those to JMUES.)”

Principal Bellemare responded that this was similar to a question posed by Vice Chair Schneider and answered.

Vice Chair Schneider asked for a future update on what items on the furniture list could be deferred.

Board Member Guagliumi complimented the administrators for the diligence they put forth when preparing the elementary budgets.

Chair Barnes added that she appreciated the collaborative effort of the administrators.

Chair Barnes asked Principal Romein for an update on the NAEP assessment for fourth graders.

Principal Romein responded that she is investigating if the two parent letters can be combined and a link to the survey will be made available to parents via each elementary school website.

Chair Barnes thanked the administrators for their responses.

- **Merrimack Middle School**

Chair Barnes invited Merrimack Middle School Principal Adam Carragher to the table.

Principal Carragher responded to board members previously submitted questions.

Chair Barnes had submitted the question “(ALL) Field Trips: What out of pocket costs do students have for these outings? Are there funds available for those receiving free/reduced lunch? Are those on free/reduced lunch expected to bring lunch from home?”

Principal Carragher responded that transportation costs are budgeted for and the cost per student is about \$10-\$12 per student. Every effort is made to enable all students to attend field trips.

Chair Barnes had submitted the question “Math Texts: You show no budget for Math Texts (only consumables in supplies). (NOT COMPLAINING!!) As others have budgeted for them who have the new math curriculum, how is it you did not have a need for any textbooks in the budget (in the event of say a lost or damaged book)?”

Principal Carragher responded that he would seek reimbursement from parents for lost/damaged textbooks.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted the question “All schools-Furniture upgrades-I realize that each school has an ongoing furniture upgrade set of line items. Can the schools help to let us understand how the listed items were chosen, and whether there are ‘must replace’ items in that list vs things that could be extended?”

Principal Carragher responded that furniture budgeting is done proactively.

Board Member Guagliumi asked how the middle school budget compares to that for last year and was told that most of the budgets are flat.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the leadership team was made aware of the school board’s budget message to stay close to level funding.

Board Member Guagliumi appreciated all of the schools’ efforts to explain variances from year-to-year.

Chair Barnes thanked Principal Carragher for his responses.

- **Merrimack High School**

Chair Barnes invited Merrimack High School Principal Sharon Putney and Assistant Principals Rich Zampieri and Peter Bergeron to the table.

Principal Putney provided budget highlights and then responded to the board’s previously submitted questions.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100.2725.20.8519.31; “As band travel is part of a graded class, why is this listed as a co-curricular expense (\$6,500)? This is money earmarked for extracurricular clubs.”

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that while band is a graded class, they also participate in competitions that are not graded.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100.1420.24-8610.31; “Please advise as to how often the uniforms of athletic teams are purchased. I have heard

comments from parents that some are in ‘gross’ condition when given to the student for the season.”

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that after speaking with Athletic Director Mike Soucy, there is a five year plan for uniform replacement. Gate receipts will also be used.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100.2725.24.8519.31; “Please provide the cost of this line item should the article for a turf field pass.”

Assistant Principal Bergeron referred to a handout created by Athletic Director Mike Soucy which was recently provided to the Superintendent’s Office. The turf field would result in almost \$63,000 less in transportation costs.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted the question “All schools-Furniture Upgrades-I realize that each school has an ongoing furniture upgrade set of line items. Can the schools help to let us understand how the listed items were chosen, and whether there are ‘must replace’ items in that list vs things that could be extended?”

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that cafeteria tables, student chairs, and student desks, are replaced annually. Art tables and a pottery table are on the current list.

Vice Chair Schneider had submitted the question “Technology Budget (and MHS)-The technology budget has detailed line items about replacement/addition of computers in each building. But the MHS budget has a specifically called-out addition of 30 laptops w/cart for the math department-which I think were referenced in the technology budget as well. Can you help us understand where the line is drawn between Technology Budget items and those called out within a specific school?”

Vice Chair Schneider withdrew the question as it had been answered the previous meeting.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-2725-30-8519-31; “Please provide detail regarding the fine art academic enrichment.”

Principal Putney responded that this refers to groups coming into the school for enrichment opportunities. Upcoming performers are Shakespeare Now and Jazzberry Jam.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-1123-23-8610-31; “The line item states the increase is due to the cost of Readtopia program. Please tell us more about this program.”

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that Readtopia is an online reading program that can be differentiated and individualized for various reading levels and it is multi-sensory.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-1103-8643-31; “Please tell us more about the Marketing Ed/New Text and the Introduction to Business course. Also, please tell us more about the new text for Computer Programming I.”

Assistant Principal Zampieri responded that that the new Intro to Business course is part of the Running Start curriculum offered through a partnership with Nashua Community College (NCC). This is the text used by NCC for the class.

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded to the Computer Programming I class question. This reaches all learners across the spectrum.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100.1108-08-8730-31; “Please tell us about the items included in this budget item. I don’t recall why we had \$0 budgeted last year, but some more information regarding these items for 2019-2020 would be helpful.”

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that the Physical Education Department head saw the need for these items this year. Items include heart rate monitors, kettle balls, a push/pull sled and other items that are games for Physical Education classes.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-1110-10-8730-31; “Please tell us for what the \$4,000K is expected to be allocated.”

Assistant Principal Bergeron responded that this is to replace an old wood lathe from the 1970’s.

Board Member Schoenfeld had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-1111-11-8730-31; “Math/Addit Equip/MHS: Will this cart be limited in its use to math, or leveraged more widely? Is there a reason this purchase is here rather than in the Technology/Library Media budget?”

Assistant Principal Zampieri checked with the Math Department head and found that the laptop cart will be used in conjunction with the new curriculum.

Chair Barnes thanked the administrators for their responses.

- **District**

Chair Barnes invited Superintendent Chiafery and her team to address board member’s pre-submitted questions.

Superintendent Chiafery asked Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell to address the most significant increases in the district budget. They are the health and dental insurances, New Hampshire retirement for professional staff, and student transportation for a total of \$1.7 million dollars.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100.2723.00.8510.00; “How many students are we currently transporting to charter schools (realizing we are required to bus to those charter schools located in Merrimack? Which schools are getting students bused to them?”

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the district provides transportation to the Gate City Charter School for about twenty students. The Merrimack school district also provides transportation to local private schools.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100.2318.8330.01; “With a noted increase in legal services required beyond the budget in this current budget year, should we consider increasing this item to better reflect usage of legal services? Please break out how much was associated with the Bevill case as it was an unprecedented event for the district which is unlikely to be recurring.”

Superintendent Chiafery recommended there be no increase for legal services. For the school year 2017-2018, \$71,900.95 was expended of which \$20,917.00 went for the Bevill case.

Chair Barnes had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100.2320.00.8430.04; “Among the \$20,000 in contracted services funding, is any of this line item associated with HB 1612’s amendment to RSA 189.66 as noted in the technology budget?”

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the \$20,000 was to cover the provisions required under the new RSA, such as tracking software.

Board Member Guagliumi had submitted a question in reference to budget line item 100-2723-00-8510-00; “I know we are required to provide this for any charter schools and students in our district, but I’m curious how many students the bus transportation cost of \$38,820.00 supports.”

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell answered this in a previous question.

Board Member Schoenfeld had submitted the question “I’d like to know more about the inclusion of the student wellness coordinator on the cut list. How will this affect students, staff/faculty/administration, and the district’s ability to support student wellbeing?”

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin responded that this position is currently contracted out and will continue this way for next year.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if there are job descriptions for both the student wellness coordinator and the benefits coordinator.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that she has this information and will bring it to the next meeting.

Chair Barnes asked for more specific information on charter school students.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin will bring this data to the next meeting.

5. Budget Discussion

Chair Barnes asked board members for suggested cut amounts.

Vice Chair Schneider would like to know the impacts if the proposed budget does not pass.

Chair Barnes noted that staff cuts are never considered for cuts unless there is a decline in enrollment.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that a more formal presentation on roofing would be a beneficial agenda item.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if this item should be posted on the Communications Committee's Facebook page.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell worked with the TV Studio staff and created an informational PowerPoint that will run on the educational channel, YouTube and the district Facebook page. He will continue to do this for future important budget items.

Vice Chair Schneider suggested a more formal presentation on the Honeywell research.

Vice Chair Schneider suggested more discussion on the impact on transportation if the turf field is not approved. He would like the athletic director to provide this information.

Board Member Guagliumi stated that she is often asked about the tax rate and how it is impacted by school projects. An information session for taxpayers would be helpful.

Chair Barnes reminded all of the value of the voter's guide.

6. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There was no public participation.

7. Motion to Adjourn

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 3-0-0.